

Review Articles

North Texas Regional Libraries

The North Texas Regional Libraries; an Inquiry into the Feasibility and Desirability of Developing Them as a Cooperative Enterprise. A. F. Kuhlman. George Peabody College Press, 1943. 85p.

This is a refreshing book. It is clear, persuasive, sensible, and revolutionary. It deals with a situation interesting in itself, and which epitomizes larger and more diversified groups of libraries. The three pairs of "North Texas regional libraries" form a triangle with sides no more than forty miles long. At the apex, in Denton, are two state-supported colleges for women. At each of the other angles, in Dallas and Fort Worth, are an urban university library and a public library. Like all Western libraries, these started late, around 1900. They are comparatively small, ranging from 80,000 to 160,000 volumes. They belong to diverse organizations. Two are municipal departments, two are state-supported college libraries, and two are parts of private institutions. They are near enough to each other to suggest cooperation but too far apart for consolidation.

The four college presidents asked Dr. Kuhlman to decide whether the libraries should be coordinated, and if so, how. To answer the first question, he surveyed in detail the area they serve, the college curricula, and the contents of the libraries. The facts upon which he based his analysis were prepared in tabular form by William Stanley Hoole and the other five librarians. Dr. Kuhlman supplemented their work by inspecting the libraries. Not very strange to say, he decided that they need coordination, for the good of upperclassmen, graduate students, professors, and businessmen. His arguments, while familiar, have seldom been presented with equal tact.

The facts brought out in the first section of the survey raise the question of why these libraries did not long ago work out a system of cooperation. Institutional and urban rivalries probably delayed cooperation until now, since, in the West, local rivalries may

be classed among the major sports. In recent years the need for cooperation has grown more and more obvious, as the college libraries reached the awkward age at which they are larger than necessary for junior college instruction but not quite large enough for effective senior college and graduate study. Graduate enrolment reached respectable proportions in the five years before Pearl Harbor. Around nine hundred, or about one third, of the graduate students of Texas attended these institutions in each of these years. The five-year total exceeds that of the University of Texas by 20 per cent. The public libraries may also have reached a turning point, if, as Dr. Kuhlman holds, they need scientific and technical publications to aid the industries centering in Dallas and Fort Worth.

Having shown that the libraries should be coordinated, Dr. Kuhlman faces the question of how to do it. He recommends a union list of serials (now compiled) and a union catalog—devices which do not of themselves coordinate library resources and services. To plan the fitting together of resources, he recommends other measures which have been adopted or suggested elsewhere without marked success, viz., unified planning, especially in the acquisition of serials, by dividing responsibility for acquiring them, and joint employment of a field agent to gather North Texas historical materials.

None of these recommendations would impair the sovereignty of each institution or city over its library, hence, up to this point the plan fails to come to grips with the central problem of library coordination in this country, which is the independence of libraries one from another and their dependence on larger organizations. Where the state controls local libraries, as in Denmark, Germany, and Russia, they can be united in a national system without difficulty. In America local and state governments by-pass the obstacles which the federal system of government places between them by establishing an *ad hoc* organization, such as the Port of New York

Authority. Dr. Kuhlman proposes this expedient for the North Texas group.

He might have proposed consolidation of the graduate schools, but to do so would have been impolitic under the circumstances. Instead, he advocates uniting the libraries under a central administration for an experimental period of three years. He specifies only vaguely the powers and duties of his *ad hoc* library authority, which is to consist of a representative council (already formed) and a director of libraries. Outwardly, his plan resembles the Oregon and Georgia college library combinations, but he substitutes for a council of librarians one of deans, trustees, and presidents. They can, if they will, go much further than librarians. The director would supervise the cooperative devices of the program and advise the council on other measures. He would not govern the member libraries, but Dr. Kuhlman hints that he might in time replace their head librarians.

Dr. Kuhlman points out the direction, without specifying the exact route and the rate of advance, leaving these tasks to the council and the director. Will the new vehicle move, without being fueled by a foundation grant? A great deal depends upon the leadership of

the council and the tact of the director, if one is appointed. If not in North Texas, such a plan may be adopted elsewhere, perhaps in circumstances permitting the director to assume authority over the internal administration of the member libraries. In regions where library use has greater variety, the professional, civic, and trade associations might be represented on the council, thereby giving the clientele of public and special libraries a voice in the planning of library resources. Central purchasing and cataloging of books might develop in some centers.

Dr. Kuhlman has invented a mechanism with great possibilities, particularly in the West and South which need a workable plan for combining libraries. While not new in a single detail, his invention offers a novel and, let us hope, practicable answer to the dilemma of library needs versus library fealty. Its worst flaw on paper—a want of detail, of specifications—will probably become its greatest virtue in practice. The details will be filled in by people aware of local limitations and potentialities. When a model has been set up and tried out, it will probably be widely copied.—*John Van Male, librarian, Madison College, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Manual for Trustees

Manual for Trustees of Colleges and Universities. Raymond Hughes. Iowa State College Press, 1943. IX, 166p.

To the librarian, as to the faculty at large, the college or university trustees are a group apart—certain gentlemen of prominence who appear at convocation or other great occasions. They, according to tradition, are the ones who blue-pencil budget requests; again, and according to the same source, they do not approve of innovations, either academic or political. As a matter of fact, librarians probably know as little about trustees as the latter know about librarians.

Trustees become trustees from a variety of sources and are chosen for a variety of reasons. They invariably come to their positions with a record of successful accomplishment in their own fields and with undoubted abilities which should be turned to the lasting profit of the institution. Many of them, however, come with little knowledge of academic procedure save what they may recollect

from their undergraduate days. The duties and powers of a trustee grew in a process somewhat akin to the development of the common law, restricted by tradition and extended by the initiative and interest of the individual trustee. Generally they have done their job well. There have been isolated cases in which boards of trustees might have been charged with neglect of duty if nothing more. At the other extreme might be placed the board of which it is said that it meets every Thursday as regularly as Rotary, stifling the college by too much government.

Primarily the duty of the trustees is to operate the college, since they, as a body corporate, actually own the institution, or, in the case of a public institution, act, as it were, with a power of attorney from the citizens. General tradition and custom indicate that this is best accomplished by the delegation of power to one or more officers, depending upon the size and complexity of the college. One would expect that the degree